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ABSTRACT

The teacher as decisionmaker is a fairly new concept, and yet the choices teachers make--among alternative approaches--afffect the attitudes, knowledge, and skills students carry into adult life. This booklet's chapter titles are as follows: (1) New Image for Teachers--Decision-Maker; (2) Decisions Teachers Make; (3) A Rational Model; (4) Planning Decisions; (5) Interaction Decisions; (6) Evaluation Decisions; (7) Principles that Guide Decision-Making; and (8) Making It Work. (Nine figures are included; a 34-item annotated bibliography of documents and journal articles in the ERIC database is attached.) (RS)

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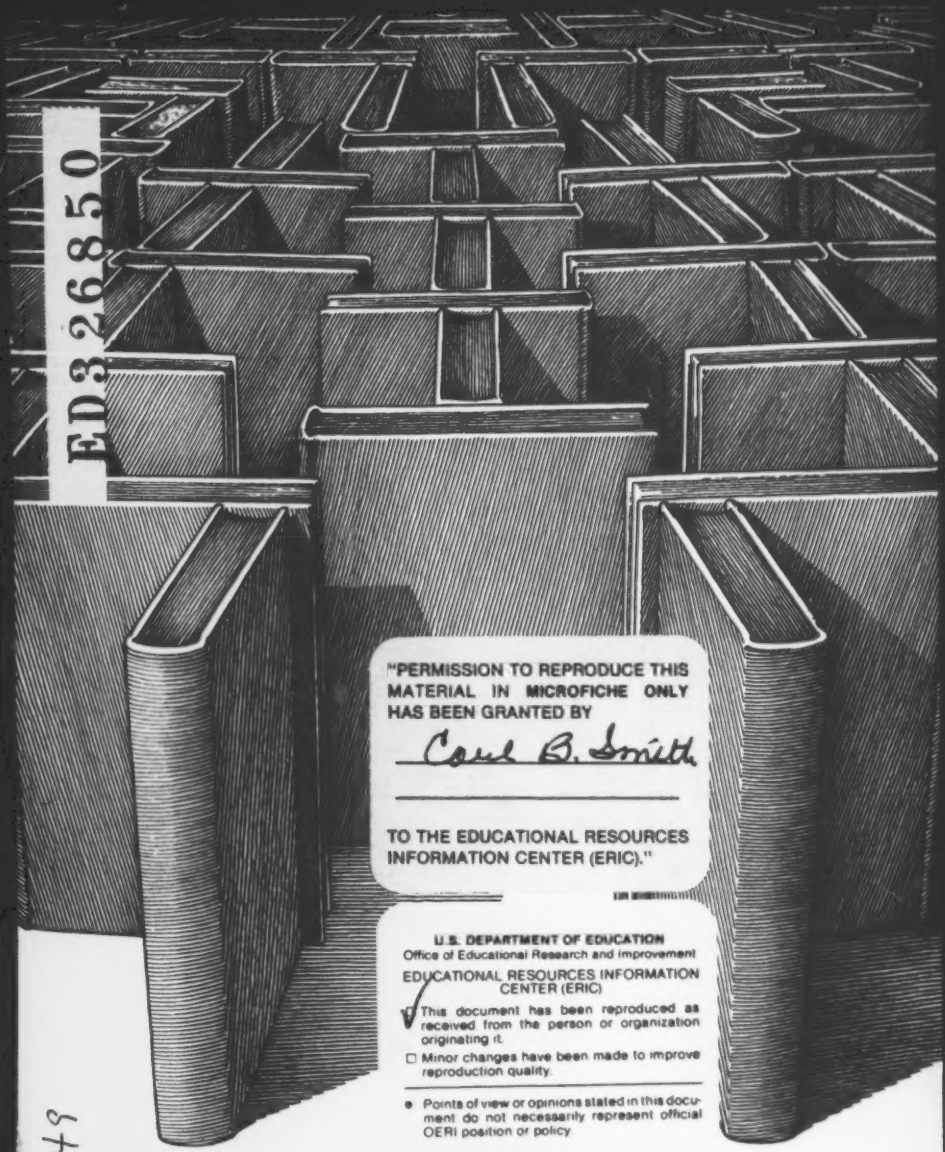

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TEACHER AS DECISION-MAKER

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New Image for Teachers - Decision-Maker

Power and decision-making go hand in hand. That's the reason, no doubt, that the recent call for the empowerment of teachers has seen a parallel interest in teacher decision-making. Everyone makes decisions, of course, as each person goes to school, buys clothes, selects food, dates, chooses a spouse, etc. But decision-making here suggests the management of a public trust — our children. It is quite appropriate, therefore, for us to ask: What decisions do teachers make and how do they make them?

As a metaphor, the teacher as a decision-maker is fairly new. Not that teachers, like every professional, haven't made choices among alternative approaches; they certainly have. But the image of a decision-maker in schools has usually been assigned to administrators whose primary function is "to make decisions." But since a decision-maker may be defined as one who regularly selects from various alternatives those actions that make a difference in the way a person functions, teachers certainly fit that definition. The alternatives that teachers select affect students' attitudes, knowledge, and the skills that they carry into the future. Very important decisions.

Decisions Teachers Make

Assuming that the purpose of teaching is to guide and direct the learning of a class and of individuals, the nature of the job involves making choices about what learners can do presently and how to keep them moving in a profitable direction — for instance, how to become competent and fluent readers. One way to understand what that means is to ask teachers. Shedd and cohorts (1986) surveyed Tucson, Arizona teachers in order to provide a documented description of teacher decision-making. Over 80% of the teachers reported that they performed eleven main responsibilities daily to weekly. Those responsibilities are listed in Figure 1.

Teachers saw each of these main responsibilities as requiring decisions. Some are planning decisions, some, interaction decisions, some, evaluation decisions. The list reveals the very active circumstances under which teachers work, and they suggest the need for reflection and for resources in order to provide adequately for student needs. They also reveal that the decisions teachers list first are those

that are made during their contact hours with students. Yet there are hints of planning decisions when they say that they decide when to alter their instructional plans.

We can infer from the Shedd study that teachers deal with large amounts of information that must be analyzed, usually on the run; that most of their decisions are made for a class group; and that teachers make decisions in relative isolation, that is, without checking with administrators or with other teachers. This lack of adult interaction has implications for inservice education and for university preservice education as will be discussed later.

A Rational Model

Some teachers seem to achieve excellent results simply by following their gut-level instincts. Their experience and intuition somehow conspire to keep students on target and to create a positive atmosphere in the process. One teacher heard a fifth grader tell her that the reading they were doing was boring. That was his excuse for not participating. The teacher's gut reaction was that the student couldn't understand the text — that was the problem. "It may be boring," she said, "but why don't you help Nicki with it. She needs to know these three things:" (the teacher listed concepts from the passage that the bored student could pass along to Nicki). The ploy worked. The bored student got involved and was no longer a problem but an active student. That kind of success encourages intuitive teachers to continue full-speed ahead. Competent and enthusiastic children are what we are all working to achieve, by whatever means the teacher has at his or her disposal.

Gut reactions, however, are not the decision-making process we are examining. If schooling is purposeful, and if decision-making is related to purposeful action, then decision-making is the rational choice of a course of action based on available alternatives. On any given day, for instance, the teacher may decide to use the textbook to advance her students or to use non-text materials — or to use some combination of text and non-text aids. Having alternatives is an essential ingredient in the very definition of decision-making.

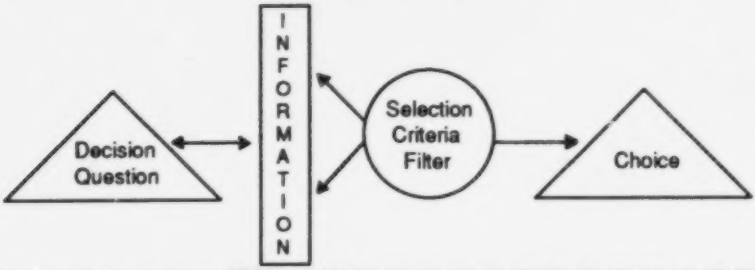
Language arts teachers in most school systems have some goals that are required by the school system and some that are determined in the classroom. Preparing children to succeed on a nationally normed reading test, for instance, may be required by the state or by the local school board. In that case, the teacher decides the best means for preparing children for success on tested objectives. Numerous alternatives are open to the teacher who then makes professional judgments about the strategies and techniques most likely to achieve that success. Those alternatives range from practicing test-taking with exercises that approximate the activities on the test to reading books and then discussing the books through questions that prompt thinking similar to that needed on the tests. Teacher's choice.

A rational decision-making model applies most easily to the long range goals teachers aim to achieve. Such a model involves four categories of action:

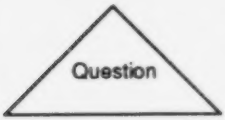
1. formulating the decision question;
2. collecting information that reveals available alternatives;
3. selecting criteria through which data is sifted;
4. making a choice.

A diagram of this model is given in Figure 2: Rational Decision Model/Sample Decision. In actual practice each of the four categories of activities informs and modifies the others. In a dynamic decision situation during the teaching day, decision-making may be much more fuzzy than the process listed here. But the basic outline for clear decision-making involves the process of focusing the question, collecting relevant data, sifting those data, and establishing a course of action.

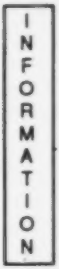
Figure 2
Rational Decision Model



Sample Decision: (Whole group instruction?)

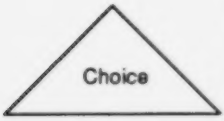


Should all children read together throughout a theme unit?



- ☐ All kids should like the first story in the unit.
- ☐ Building a common background promotes interaction.
- ☐ Some or all of the stories in the unit are too difficult for one-third of the class to read indepedently.
- ☐ Common discussions on the theme expand understanding.
- ☐ Students can expand the theme in the library.
- ☐ Students enjoy a sense of independence.
- ☐ Cooperative grouping enables different levels to work together.

- ○ Make every child feel successful.
- ○ All children should share some ideas on this theme.



1. Have children build a common background then read the first selection together.
2. Subsequent selections should be read individually in small groups according to needs.
3. Conclude with a whole group story and a general sharing of what they have learned across the unit.

The decisions we have just mentioned are planning decisions. Most of those planning decisions are targeted for the short time that the teacher and one group of students will work together. Some of those planning decisions refer to the long range goals of the school and the state curriculum; some, to immediate objectives determined by the needs of the class and of individuals. Motivating a group of uninterested readers, for example, may be a pressing short term objective that the teacher has to work out right now. It takes planning in the same way that achieving the long range goals requires planning.

Teachers usually decide on the short term goals and the means to achieve them. Almost all of the decision responsibilities listed in the Shedd study focus on the short term activities of daily class meetings. The broad school community usually selects the long range goals. Teachers then decide on the means to achieve those goals. That's another reason the list of decision responsibilities given by teachers seems to be concerned with the activities of the day or of the week. Interestingly enough, Shavelson (1981) found that teachers make short term decisions quite well; they do not do as well with long-term content goals and long-term learning principles.

In order to achieve long range goals — those that guide learning across many years — most school systems choose a textbook series as a management tool. A basal reader, for example, provides wide ranging literature, the systematic development of thinking strategies, and planned attention to the skills and the concepts most school systems expect to achieve across the elementary years. Thus the basal reader becomes a very powerful means for the teacher to work on long range goals with the other teachers in the school. Naturally, the teacher has numerous other options available to achieve those long range ends — learning centers, libraries, their personal curriculum handbooks.

Personal Goals

When the immediate needs of the children or the personal desires of the teacher are the issue, the teacher can decide which ones to choose, which to stress, and how to achieve those immediate objectives. These are the kinds of decisions that are made in the

planning period or during the reflective time that teachers spend in preparing to meet the children. They include decisions about:

- the daily schedule
- motivating individuals
- real world reading
- learning styles
- skills and strategies
- literature to appeal to personal interests

These examples reflect the broad scope of decisions in which teachers may be involved.

Community Goals

Assuming that the long term goals for instruction in language arts are established by the community and that the teacher is trying to carry out those goals, what are the decision questions that a teacher answers? Assuming, too, that the teacher has almost full responsibility for those goals that are personal to the class and to the individual children in the class, what are the decision questions that a teacher answers? Figure 3: Planning Decisions for the Language Arts Teacher, lists the common planning decisions.

Figure 3

PLANNING DECISIONS FOR THE LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER

1. What are the literature goals?
2. What are the skills goals?
3. Which strategies will achieve the goals?
4. What materials and resources should be used?
5. What should be evaluated and how?

Interactive Decisions

Most of the major decision categories given by the teachers in the Shedd study (1986) might be categorized as interaction decisions, that is, decisions they make as they move among the children and see what they have to do to promote better learning. Those decisions were:

- Recording attendance
- Keeping students on task
- Communicating expectations to students
- Making mid-stream changes in plans
- Leading class discussions and giving demonstrations
- Administering in-class discipline
- Assigning class work and homework
- Delivering whole class lectures
- Helping individual students
- Instructing small groups

From the perspective of the language arts teacher, those in-class decisions could be summarized as seen in Figure 4: Decisions During Teaching. These decisions depend on the availability of alternatives, just as the planning decisions do. Building background or the development of concepts can be brief or elaborate depending on the needs of the class. How to expand concept development needs to be decided on the spot. Should children with broad experience in the subject be encouraged to fill out a concept map and then explain their ideas to the rest of the class or should the teacher read aloud from the classroom library and use one of the books there to create visual images and to build context and definitions for the key vocabulary of the selections to be read by students?

Figure 4

DECISIONS DURING TEACHING

1. Are the students purposeful?
2. Are they actively engaged with ideas?
3. Are they monitoring their own thinking?
4. Are they sharing responses?

Because teachers deal regularly with the kinds of interaction decisions listed in Figure 4, they quickly turn them into routines. As is true in every other phase of life, successful practices become habits. Those habits make life easier and prevent us from collapsing

with decision-overload. Can you imagine your mental state, for instance, if you had to decide each morning how to tie your shoes, or which one you will put on first. If we did not turn most of our daily decisions into habitual actions, we would find it hard to get out of the house to go to our jobs.

That's the reason we develop patterns for asking questions about reading, of assigning writing responses after essays, of asking children to predict further action to stories that leave us thinking, and so on. That multiplicity of daily decisions also explains why we want a wide variety of books, learning centers, activity sheets, games, and computers in the classroom. When the needs are many, we want to have alternative solutions at hand in order to respond.

Students themselves become part of the decision process. Their daily needs in fact become decision questions. The students also suggest some of the available information and the selection criteria. When a student says he does not know how to read the chart or the map in an article or does not see why he has to read poetry, a decision point has been identified. The ensuing interaction between teacher and student may well provide the information and the criteria that will help the student and the teacher decide what action to take.

Evaluation Decisions

Giving grades for a report card often bothers teachers, but the teachers' job requires an assessment of student progress. Just as some goals are community goals, so some assessment is related to community standards. Helping children see their progress towards those goals involves collecting and reporting evidence. The teacher needs to decide how to accomplish that assessment and that reporting. Formal tests, of course, are one way to accomplish that end. But student compositions, tape recordings, informal checklists, other work from the student are other kinds of evidence that can be used to represent progress. Figure 5: Informal Observations of Reading Strategies, is an example of a checklist that teachers could use to collect data and to report it to students. Data about strategic reading behavior could be collected informally over a period of weeks and then used in a conference with the student to help the student target some of the long term goals of reading instruction.

In similar fashion the personal short term goals of students and teachers involve an evaluation of progress. For some, those goals refer to becoming a more clever writer; for others, becoming fluent in grade level vocabulary. Teacher and student, after deciding on the desired achievement, can decide on progress reports and how those reports should be delivered. Using a checklist, such as the one shown in Figure 5, represents one of many alternatives.

Student Action

One student that we know would never participate in the small group discussions involving shared stories. The teacher and the student agreed that over a two week period, the student would learn to become active. He would do this by making one statement each of the first two days, two comments each of the second two days, three comments each of the third two days, and four comments each of the remaining days of the second week. They drew up a recording chart as seen in Figure 6: Joshua's Daily Contributions. Every two days, the student brought the chart to the teacher and discussed what he had done. As simple as it may seem, that evaluation technique, that is, reporting instances of desired activity, gradually brought that student into the mainstream of this group. Sharing language became a normal part of his activity instead of a rejected part of the language arts class, because Joshua became part

Figure 5

Informal Observational Checklist
STRATEGIC READING BEHAVIORS

Directions: For each criterion below, rate the student by checking one of the three boxes. Additional comments and a list of activities may be recorded on the back of this form. Use the Summary to record an overall rating.

	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Excellent
BEFORE READING			
Activates prior knowledge	☐	☐	☐
Learns background information	☐	☐	☐
Previews the selection	☐	☐	☐
Sets purpose(s) for reading	☐	☐	☐
Makes predictions	☐	☐	☐
Relates personal experiences to the reading	☐	☐	☐
DURING READING			
Comprehension Strategies			
Monitors comprehension	☐	☐	☐
Takes notes	☐	☐	☐
Highlights important points	☐	☐	☐
Summarizes major points	☐	☐	☐
Adjusts reading rate as needed	☐	☐	☐
Applies SQ3R	☐	☐	☐

Informal Observational Checklist-
STRATEGIC READING BEHAVIORS

Vocabulary Strategies Decodes unfamiliar words by relating them to familiar words Uses structural clues to recognize meaningful parts of unfamiliar words Uses semantic context clues to determine word meaning Uses syntactic clues, including word order and referents, to determine the function and/or meaning of words	☐☐ ☐☐	☐☐ ☐☐	☐☐ ☐☐
AFTER READING **Text Structure** Identifies story elements Completes story map Completes story frame Retells story in own words Identifies organizational patterns Compares story to other stories	☐☐☐☐☐ ☐	☐☐☐☐☐ ☐	☐☐☐☐☐ ☐
Comprehension Answers questions related to text Checks accuracy of predictions Achieves purpose of reading	☐☐ ☐	☐☐ ☐	☐☐ ☐

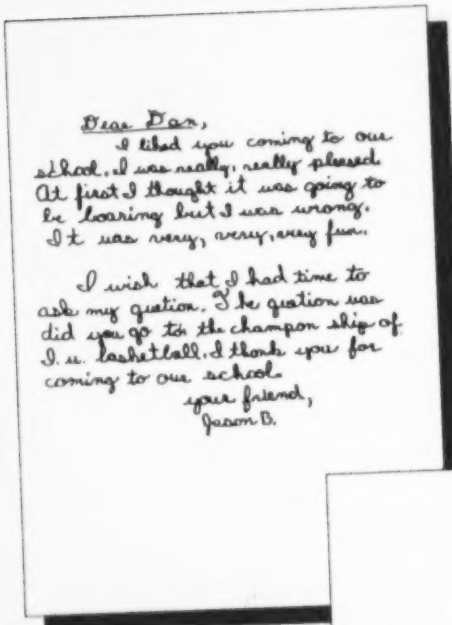
of the evaluation decision on an important aspect of language arts behavior.

One of our student teachers invited a newspaper writer to her fifth grade class so the students could ask him questions about his work. It was part of a lesson on how to use the newspaper to get information about the broad world. When the reporter left, the student teacher asked the students to write a letter to the reporter to discuss his visit. She was pleased to find that the average student in the class sent a letter like the one in Figure 7, but she also found that there were some students in the class who wrote a letter like the one in Figure 8. How could those students have gone through the same previous four years? But the tough decision was how to evaluate the performance of these two fifth grade students.

Figure 6
JOSHUA'S DAILY CONTRIBUTIONS

Day	No. of Contributions	Comments
1		
2		
⇨		Report
3		
4		
⇨		Report
etc.		

Like many beginning teachers, she thought that easy standards could be applied to which students would conform. She was learning quickly that evaluating student work requires judgments that can't always rely on model standards. A couple of students in her class did not seem to have made much progress in writing over the previous four years in school. Her job, then, was not merely to challenge the poor performers to move forward but also to decide what kind of learning environment prevented them from making progress in the past. The students very likely are the best informants as the teacher gathers information to evaluate student progress.



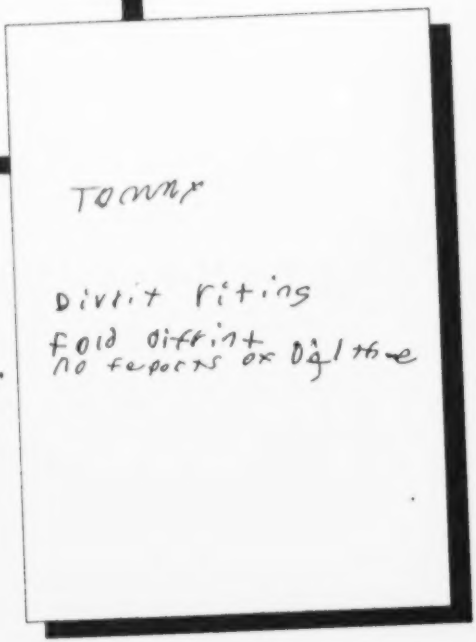
Dear Dan,
I liked you coming to our school. I was really, really pleased. At first I thought it was going to be boaring but I was wrong. It was very, very, very fun.

I wish that I had time to ask my quetion. The quetion was did you go to the champon ship of U. S. basketball. I thank you for coming to our school.

your friend,
Jason B.

Figure 7

Grade 5 Writing Sample "A"



TOWN?

Divit ritins
fold diffrint ox Dgl the
no reports ox Dgl the

Figure 8

Grade 5 Writing Sample "B"

Evaluation need not compare one member of the class with all other members of the class. Sometimes, marking his own progress toward a personal goal is as important to a student and as effective for education as are the more public and competitive measures.

Principles That Guide Decision-Making

Decision-making about the complex issues found in teaching language arts can become more manageable when they are guided by a teaching philosophy or by learning principles. If one is guided by the time-on-task principle, a teacher simply has to ask herself: "Which of the available alternatives gives the student the most time doing what is eventually expected?" (Which approach gives the student more time in reading information texts?) The choices can become clearer if guided in that way.

Occasionally, the chosen alternative does not produce the desired results: the student fails to increase fluency even though he has been given much time for reading. That situation tells the teacher that something else has to be tried. Usually, more information needs to be collected about the student and his behavior before some other approach is chosen.

Another learning principle that might help the student teacher mentioned above is deciding to divide learning into shorter blocks of knowledge and more frequent practice. Though all fifth grade students in a given class may have similar social experiences and may understand the general vocabulary of fifth graders, there are those who need more careful structuring of knowledge or who need shorter reading selections while some of their classmates read longer selections.

Not every case will lend itself neatly to a known principle of learning. Then it may help the teacher to be guided by a general philosophy. For some people, it may be helpful to follow the philosophy that reading is a social transaction. Therefore, teacher choices can lean in the direction of sharing ideas, emphasizing group discussions, writing responses to stories so they can be shared and compared, and so on. Or the teacher may be more comfortable with the philosophy that reading is primarily a personal construction of meaning based on an individual's purpose. Therefore, teacher choices can encourage students to think of their own personal needs and write personal responses in a log as a way of thinking about the ideas.

If decision-making means rational behavior, then classroom decisions will be more reasonable and more defensible as teachers

use a rational model. One way that teachers can promote rationality is to list the principles or the philosophies that they want to guide their instruction. Sample principles related to reading and language arts are the following:

- Build vocabulary as a way to expand concepts.
- Practice reading by reading books and magazines.
- Respond to reading through writing.
- Independent reading will grow if students have books and magazines at their independent level.
- Expand children's reading interests by sampling a broad range of topics and types of literature.
- Encourage sharing of learning through various kinds of cooperative and collaborative groups.

As an aid to decision-making, some teachers find it helpful to spend reflective time with a decision chart similar to the one outlined in Figure 9: Reading Decision Chart. Since there is no way to list all the possible decisions that arise in the day-to-day world of the language arts classroom, a teacher can list major categories of frequent decisions and remind herself to look for alternatives and to look for standards or criteria. With a framework the teacher approaches decision-making in a rational manner. Some of the stress of teaching eases because more decisions will be made rationally instead of emotionally. It is the emotional nature of life, after all, that creates the stress that wears many of us down.

That doesn't mean that teacher decisions can or should be made without emotion. Students are emotional bundles, not learning machines. When a child is in trouble, teachers respond with compassion as well as with professional judgment. But the more responsibility the teacher takes for controlling the classroom, the more professional judgment needs to be supported by planning, by principles of learning, by professional management guidelines, by knowledge of community requirements, and by evaluating where students fit into the long range reading and language arts curriculum picture. Teacher decision-making is a natural consequence of a teacher's professional responsibility to guide learning.

Figure 9
READING DECISION CHART

In the left column are listed the kinds of planning decisions and student contact decisions that a teacher makes. In the right column are brief indications of how a basal reader Teacher's Edition provides help with those decisions.

Planning Decisions	*Teacher's Edition Provides*
1. Determining objectives 2. Motivating learning 3. Identifying concepts and materials 4. Identifying practice and activities and materials 5. Monitoring progress 6. Reteaching and enrichment	Teacher's Edition offers the teacher an overview planning page that clearly delineates the objectives and all the resources needed for teaching each lesson.
Contact Decisions	***Teacher's Edition Provides***
1. Preparing for Reading	
• Presenting vocabulary	• Vocabulary is consistently introduced prior to reading to facilitate comprehension.
• Teaching a key skill	• An essential skill that can be practiced in the story is pretaught so the student sees immediate application.
• Reinforcing vocabulary and concepts	• Activities and practice materials reinforce key vocabulary and concepts.
2. Reading for Comprehension	
• Developing background	• Every selection provides suggestions for using students' prior knowledge, such as schema building to improve comprehension.
• Setting purposes for reading	• Students are encouraged to create their own purpose-setting questions.
• Reading and discussing the selection	• Various options are provided for different types of learners.
—Guided reading	—Guided reading questions develop story sequence and prediction skills. Use as needed.

—Applying comprehension —Discussing and rereading orally —Making connections	—Previously taught comprehension skills are applied directly to the part of the story where they fit. —Discussion directions provide for the systematic use of literal, interpretive, critical and creative-thinking skills. —Students relate what they are reading to other stories, to their own lives, to the theme of the unit.
3. Teaching Skills and Strategies • Defining/Motivating • Developing • Applying • Checking understanding • Independent practice • Reteaching	• Motivational activity focuses attention on the skill and helps set the objective. • Activity reveals the skill through modeling, demonstrating, discussing. • Guided practice occurs through various activities and questions in the Teacher's Edition. • Questions and observational checklists offer means to estimate student progress. • Teacher's Edition activities and materials provide student opportunity to practice on his own. • Alternative learning activities enable teachers to work with special needs.
4. Enrichment and Connection to Language Arts • Connecting with writing • Enrichment through books and drama	Process writing exercises are available. Author biographies, bibliographies related to the unit theme, and activities for classroom drama highlight enrichment activities.

Annotated Bibliography

For further reading about classroom decision-making we list the following articles. The annotations come from the ERIC database and thus the ERIC access number is listed with each item to assist you in finding/ordering the complete text of those that you wish to read in full. Information on ordering copies of these articles is listed at the end of the bibliography.

Alvermann, Donna E. "The Role of Textbooks in Teachers' Interactive Decision Making." *Reading Research and Instruction* Vol. 26, No. 2 (Winter 1987), pp. 115-127. ERIC # EJ349085

ABSTRACT: Examines teachers' decisions to make adjustments in their preplanned discussion routines to better facilitate students' comprehension of previously assigned content area materials in terms of how texts figured into those decisions.

Alvermann, Donna E., Ed., et. al. "Research within Reach: Secondary School Reading: A Research Guided Response to Concerns of Reading Educators." (Revised) Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, W. VA; International Reading Association, Newark, DE. (1987), 201 p. ERIC # ED282187

ABSTRACT: Focusing on how secondary school reading programs can be organized and on how their effectiveness can be measured, this book synthesizes reading research in several significant areas and makes concrete suggestions for using this research to improve reading instruction. Each chapter, opens with a question posed by a teacher, discusses research with reference to this question, and concludes with a summary and a list of references. Generally, chapters present various, well-documented processes and products (individually or in limited combinations) that contribute to effective reading instruction in secondary schools. The practitioners' contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field is recognized, thereby enhancing the reciprocity between researchers and practitioners. Each chapter concludes with a summary and a list of references. Titles and authors of chapters included are (1) "Reading Programs" (D.W. Moore and A.G. Murphy); (2) "Effective Schools/Effective Teaching Research" (M.W. Conley and A.G. Murphy); (3) "Developing Lifetime Readers" (D.E. Alvermann); (4) "Learning from Text" (D.E. Alvermann); (5) "Comprehension/

Thinking Skills" (D.E. Alvermann); (6) "Vocabulary" (D.W. Moore); (7) "Readability" (D. Holdzkom); (8) "Selection of Materials" (D.W. Moore and A.G. Murphy); (9) "Integrating Oral and Written Language" (D.E. Alvermann); (10) "Grouping" (M.W. Conley); (11) "Teacher Decisionmaking" (M.W. Conley); (12) "Metacognition" (D.E. Alvermann); and (13) "Staff Development" (P.B. Lutz).

Alvermann, Donna E. "The Impact of Curricular Perceptions on Instructional Decisions: A Framework for Research." *Journal of Reading Education* Vol. 11, No. 2 (Winter 1985-86), pp. 7-17. ERIC # EJ332856

ABSTRACT: Argues that instructional decisions may be affected by the conflict produced when teachers' curricular perceptions do not match those that underlie a recommended teaching strategy and presents an ideological framework for comparing secondary reading goals and their related curricula.

Bailey, Gerald D. "Guidelines for Improving the Textbook/Material Selection Process." *NASSP Bulletin* Vol. 72, No. 506 (Mar. 1988), pp. 87-92. ERIC # EJ370208

ABSTRACT: If the textbook and material selection process is to be adequately supported in school budgets, curriculum directors, teachers, and administrators must be able to defend their requests with high-quality information. This article offers nine suggestions to help build a leadership structure and a database for making appropriate textbook selections.

Banks, Karen Vlahos, and Patricia Nolen. "Diagnostic and Prescriptive Skills of Teachers and Related Specialists." (1985), 26 p. ERIC # ED265502

ABSTRACT: In light of criticisms that teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare prospective reading teachers and specialists for actual classroom problems, a study was conducted to determine the accuracy of teacher diagnoses and planning for reading

difficulties and to examine differences in coursework preparation and classroom experience. Subjects, 94 education students, were grouped according to their coursework backgrounds as follows: (1) those having taken developmental and diagnostic reading instruction courses, (2) those having taken only diagnostic reading instruction courses, and (3) those having taken only developmental reading instruction courses. Information about the teaching backgrounds of each was also collected. Subjects were asked to develop diagnoses and prescriptive plans for four cases, each characterized by a different reading problem. The responses were evaluated according to the judgments of three experts in the field. Results showed that coursework background and years of teaching experience did not lead to differential performance in diagnosing and planning instruction. In addition, the subjects performed poorly in comparison with expert judgment on all variables examined.

Bondy, Elizabeth. "From Techniques to Process: Explorations beneath the Tip of the Iceberg." *Reading World* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Mar 1985), pp. 66-74. ERIC # EJ316561

ABSTRACT: Examines the nature of reading instruction across the United States, considers why problems exist, and suggests strategies for improvement. Concludes that among the many sources of information that influence teachers' decisions about reading instruction, the least influential appears to be theoretical knowledge of the reading process.

Combs, Martha. "Beginning Teachers: How Do They Make Decisions about Reading?" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading and Language Arts Educators' Conference (1st, Kansas City, MO, September 26-28, 1984), 15 p. ERIC # ED251808

ABSTRACT: Sixteen first-year elementary school teachers participated in telephone interviews and classroom observations that focused on decision-making processes before and during reading instruction. The most difficult aspect for the majority of teachers interviewed was explaining what influenced their decisions. The major decisions made prior to reading centered around grouping, techniques, materials, and

pacing. Initial placement of students in reading groups was based on standardized reading test scores and recommendations made during the previous year, while the decision to rely heavily upon oral reading performance and phonics ability seemed to be a function of both the reading consultant's practices and the new teacher's own experience as a reader. Neither informal reading inventories nor training from methods courses were used in the placement. While concerned about flexibility in meeting individual needs of students, only about one quarter of the teachers routinely considered making reading group changes throughout the year. Teachers did not feel the pressure for pacing with children in high ability groups that they felt with those in low reading ability groups. Techniques for instruction centered on student motivation rather than on effective teaching strategies. Teachers seemed to feel a need to complete the lesson as planned or to wait until after instruction to formulate any new teaching plans. Such changes seemed related to the use of new materials to teach the same skill rather than a different approach. The results suggest that teacher educators should help prospective teachers view themselves as decision-makers, and should use a planning process that encourages prospective teachers to consider alternative teaching strategies.

Duffy, Gerald G., et al. "Putting the Teacher in Control: Basal Reading Textbooks and Instructional Decision Making." *Elementary School Journal* Vol. 87, No. 3 (Jan 1987), pp. 357-366. ERIC # EJ347839

ABSTRACT: In an instructional study, teachers were taught to make decisions about reading instruction while simultaneously following directives about how to use a mandated basal reading textbook. This article examines how such directives influenced elementary school teachers' perceptions of their role as reading teachers.

Duffy, Gerald G. and Deborah Ball. "Instructional Decision Making and Reading Teacher Effectiveness." Occasional Paper No. 69. Michigan State University, East Lansing. Institute for Research on Teaching, (1983), 25 p. ERIC # ED237936

ABSTRACT: A review of the literature reveals little evidence that classroom decision-making is an important component in teaching

effectiveness. Studies investigating decision-making before (preactive) and during (interactive) instruction indicate that teachers are preoccupied with activity flow and procedural concerns rather than with increasing student understanding. Three lines of reading research—teacher decisions about reading groups, teacher interruption behavior during children's reading, and teacher use of basal materials—also reveal little decision- making behavior. These findings may indicate, however, not that teachers fail to make instructional decisions, but that research methodology lacks the sophistication to identify teacher decision-making. Current research may make false assumptions about how teachers make use of knowledge, may fail to reflect the complexity of instruction itself, or may not understand teachers' limited control over instructional materials or practices.

Elliott, John D. "Teacher Thinking and Instructional Materials: Some Relationships Between a Case Study and a Literature Review." (1988), 18 p. ERIC # ED292782

ABSTRACT: Instructional materials are usually selected by classroom teachers. Little is known about what criteria they use in making these choices. Most of the literature recommends, instead, the attributes to be used. This study employs a qualitative approach to examine one teacher's thinking about her selection of materials. Fundamental to her thinking was a preference for materials that interest, and reflect the needs of, the students. Sixteen references are included.

Englert, Carol Sue and Melvyn I. Semmel. "Spontaneous Teacher Decision Making in Interactive Instructional Contexts." *Journal of Educational Research* Vol. 77, No. 2 (Nov-Dec 1983), pp. 112-121. ERIC # EJ290761

ABSTRACT: The effect of pupils' reading miscues and achievement levels on their teachers' prompting decisions was examined in a study involving teacher trainees and elementary school special education students. Teachers were actively engaged in decision-making, and although pupil traits affected teachers' decisions, teaching moves were sometimes inappropriate for errors.

Guthrie, John T. and Robert W. Lissitz. "A Framework for Assessment-Based Decisionmaking in Reading Education." *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice* Vol. 4, No. 2 (Summer 1985), pp. 26-30. ERIC # EJ317662

ABSTRACT: This reaction paper stresses the importance of matching the qualitatively different types of educational decisions with appropriate types of tests. Reading instruction is used to illustrate that while standardized tests are helpful for student classification and program accountability, they are hazardous to instructional process decisions which need cognitive process measures.

Hatcher, Catherine W. "Problems of Change: Bounded Rationality — What Do Teachers Really Do?" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (28th, Anaheim, CA, May 2-6, 1983), 22 p. ERIC # ED240495

ABSTRACT: Through an integration of teacher effectiveness and reading research, this paper proposes ways for improving classroom reading instruction. The first part of the paper reviews teacher effectiveness research, noting the shifts that have occurred in that area from the early efforts, which focused on identifying and describing teacher characteristics associated with high or low student outcomes, to more recent efforts that have looked at teachers' goals, judgments, and decision-making processes. The second section discusses the idea of "bounded rationality," which posits that because they work in a complex environment and must make decisions immediately, teachers have to construct a simplified model of a real situation and behave according to that model. The third section looks at research relative to teacher thought, judgment, and decision-making, concentrating on the cognitive model proposed by R. Shavelson and P. Stern. The fourth section considers research covering decision-making during reading instruction, specifically in the areas of teacher planning, classroom practice, and teacher concepts of reading. The final section describes the Concerns-Based Adoption Model — developed at the University of Texas and built on assumptions about school characteristics, adults as learners, and the change process — and discusses the implications of this model for classroom instruction.

Hoover, Nora Lee. "Teachers' Self-Reports of Critical Decisions in Teaching Reading." *Reading Teacher* Vol. 38, No. 4, (Jan 1985), pp. 440-445. ERIC # EJ309809

ABSTRACT: Classroom teachers identified all the decisions they made in order to teach reading effectively and then ranked the three they considered most critical to student reading achievement. Results showed that placement decisions were viewed by teachers as primary, followed by decisions relating to student needs and those concerning program improvement.

Hutson, Barbara A. and Jerome A. Niles. "Reading Grouping as Decision-Making: Selection and Effects of Cues." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, Oct 1982), 32 p. ERIC # ED222875

ABSTRACT: A group composed of 124 classroom teachers, reading teachers, and graduate students in reading specialization programs participated in a study that examined how teachers select and use information in judging students' probable performance in reading groups. Each subject read two case studies (one describing a boy with social problems but no reading problems, the other describing a boy with reading problems and no social difficulties) and rated whether the student described in each should be placed in a low, middle, or high reading group. After this rating, subjects were allowed to select one of five areas in which they would like to have additional information about the student. Following this they gave the student a second rating, requested information from another area, and completed a third rating. Results indicated that both initial ratings and initial information requests were related to type of case presented, that the patterns of information requested differed by problem type, and that final ratings and shifts in ratings were related to the positive or negative value of the information received. (Copies of the two cases are included.)

McHugh, Linda M. "Similarities among Diagnostic and Prescriptive Decisions Made by Reading Specialists and LD, Title 1, and

Fourth-Grade Teachers." *Journal of Learning Disabilities* Vol. 15, No. 9, (Nov 1982), pp. 545-548. ERIC # EJ274348

ABSTRACT: Results of study designed to compare diagnostic and prescriptive decisions of 90 reading specialists and teachers about a fourth grader experiencing reading difficulty found the Ss made very similar diagnostic and prescriptive decisions except for establishing the child's instructional reading level. Then reading specialists and LD and Title One teachers usually recommended easier instructional materials than classroom teachers.

O'Neal, Sharon F. and James V. Hoffman. "Curriculum Decision Making and the Beginning Teacher." Report No. 9058, Texas University, Austin. Research and Development Center for Teacher Education. (1984), 37 p. ERIC # ED251439

ABSTRACT: In a study of four beginning teachers' understanding of curriculum decision-making, three questions were addressed: (1) How do beginning teachers understand district policies about curriculum decision-making? (2) How can or should school districts provide guidance and leadership to incoming teachers? and (3) Do current induction policies consider beginning teachers' knowledge of curriculum decisions? Data were collected through focused interviews with four beginning elementary teachers and their principals from two different school districts. Also interviewed were the curriculum coordinator responsible for the reading programs within each district and the reading coordinator for the state department of education. Findings indicated that there was occasional disagreement over decision-making responsibility at all levels. Curriculum decision-making was seen as moving further away from the classroom. Teachers and principals reported that their responsibilities in this area had diminished over the last few years, while district and state level responsibilities increased. Case studies are presented of the decision-making process in the four schools and at the district and state levels.

Pittman, Sherry I. "Teachers' Plans for Managing Students." (1984), 52 p. ERIC #ED251453

ABSTRACT: A study of three first grade teachers, who were interviewed and observed in the classroom setting, demonstrates a link between teachers' plans for action that they have developed over years of teaching and their routine management of students during reading. Both management and instructional goals, embedded in teacher beliefs about learning and child development, provide the rationale for making decisions based on culturally specific criteria. The findings, which include tabulated data, caution against assuming that teachers are not considering goals and objectives when planning and carrying out classroom activities, though they tend not to mention them spontaneously to interviewers.

Putnam, Joyce and Gerald G. Duffy. "A Descriptive Study of the Preactive and Interactive Decision Making of an Expert Classroom Teacher." Research Series No. 148. Michigan State University, East Lansing. Institute for Research on Teaching, (1984), 34 p. ERIC # ED251451

ABSTRACT: An expert reading instruction teacher was studied for one academic year to explore his interactive decision-making processes. Previous lines of research have indicated that, for some teachers, interactive decision-making involves more than simply maintaining established routines that assure smooth activity flow and involves deviating from the pre-planned activities to attend to issues of content and pedagogy. In this study, Shavelson and Stern's models of preactive and interactive decision-making were used to describe the expert teacher's actual performance. Specific examples of teacher-student interactions are given, with analyses of how they reflected the close relationship that existed between the teacher's preactive and interactive decision-making and his knowledge, values, and beliefs about how reading should be taught. The study revealed that at least some teachers do make more interactive decisions during reading instruction. It also dramatized the relationship between preactive and interactive teaching, and the relationship between instructional plans and implementation of those plans. The study also emphasized that interactive decision-making may not be a static phenomenon; rather, it takes different forms at different times of the academic year according to the function of instruction and the teacher's focus. The results support the

Shavelson and Stern Models (1981) and suggest that those models are useful for explaining teacher decision-making and planning further research.

Rhodes, Sharyn Simpson. "Mini-Assessment: A Practical Approach to Classroom Identification of Learning Disabled Readers." *Reading Horizons* Vol. 25, No. 3 (Spring 1985), pp. 186-193. ERIC # EJ315185

ABSTRACT: Presents a classroom method by which teachers can decide upon the placement of and type of instruction for reading disabled children.

Rupley, William H. and John W. Logan. "Elementary Teachers' Beliefs about Reading and Knowledge of Reading Content: Relationships to Decision about Reading Outcomes." *Reading Psychology* Vol. 6, Nos. 3-4, (1985), pp. 145-156. ERIC # EJ326561

ABSTRACT: Concludes that beliefs about reading influence teachers' decisions about the importance of reading outcomes typically taught in the elementary grades, and that teachers who hold student-centered reading beliefs are not likely to value instruction that focuses on decoding.

Russavage, Patricia M. et al. "Making Responsible Instructional Decisions about Reading: What Teachers Think and Do about Basals." *Reading Teacher* Vol. 39, No. 3 (Dec 1985), pp. 314-317. ERIC # EJ326503

ABSTRACT: Concludes that teachers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of basal reader programs and that they exercise their professional responsibilities by enhancing and modifying commercial materials in ways that improve instruction and reflect the tenets of current research and theory.

Scott, Diana and Jeanne Barker. "Guidelines for Selecting and Evaluating Reading Software: Improving the Decision Making Process." *Reading Teacher* Vol. 40, No. 9 (May 1987) pp. 884-887.
ERIC # EJ350602

ABSTRACT: Focuses on the selection and evaluation of courseware for use with a reading program. Gives examples of courseware to support the ideas presented, together with a sample checklist for software evaluation.

Shavelson, Richard J., and Paula Stern. "Research on Teachers' Pedagogical Thoughts, Judgments, Decisions, and Behavior." *Review of Educational Research* Vol. 51, No. 4, (Winter 1981), pp. 455-498.
ERIC # EJ257299

ABSTRACT: Based on research done in the past decade, the authors formulated a "schema" of teachers' judgments, planning and interactive decisions. Recommendations for future research included development of a taxonomy of critical teaching decisions, intervention, and alteration of teachers' plans and decisions to improve teaching, and implementation of recommendations.

Shedd, J.B. et al. "Teachers as Decision-Makers." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, (April 1986), 38 p.
ERIC # ED280132

ABSTRACT: Scholars working from various perspectives are beginning to define teaching as a decision-making process. Research shows that teachers are reflective and connect knowledge to situations through observation, understanding, analysis, interpretation, and decision-making. This paper provides empirical evidence to show the relationship of decision-making to the nature of teaching. The paper also presents a conceptual framework to help scholars and practitioners integrate various perspectives on teacher decision-making. Evidence is drawn from a teacher survey conducted by the Tucson (Arizona) Education Association. Teachers identified 25 responsibilities that

needed to be integrated into their everyday schedules. Following an analysis of purposes and processes of teachers' actions, a responsibility matrix is constructed and discussed. Three features emerge: (1) teaching as an intensely active profession, (2) teachers' conflicting and ambiguous relationships with students (as managers, counselors, and craftspersons), and (3) teachers' isolation from administrators and each other. Various models attempting to capture the overall character of teaching processes are presented and discussed. The paper concludes by exploring alternatives for action in teacher decision-making processes. Effective teachers recognize "no best way" to teach in any given situation and seek innovative solutions to unanticipated problems. Included are 20 references.

Shefelbine, John L. and Sandra Hollingsworth. "The Instructional Decisions of Preservice Teachers During a Reading Practicum." *Journal of Teacher Education* Vol. 38, No. 1 (Jan-Feb 1987), pp. 36-42. ERIC # EJ351682

ABSTRACT: Evaluation of the instructional decision-making processes of 14 preservice elementary school teachers during a reading practicum indicated that decisions about diagnosis, planning, lesson balance, and word recognition instruction were difficult even for the best of the prospective teachers, while lower performing teachers also had trouble with text placement, type of reading practice, and developing background knowledge.

Spring, Helena T. "Teacher Decisionmaking: A Metacognitive Approach." *Reading Teacher* Vol. 39, No. 3, (Dec 1985), pp. 290-295. ERIC # EJ326498

ABSTRACT: Describes how teachers can apply metacomponents to their instructional decision-making to help them develop and execute comprehension training lessons.

Stern, Paula and Richard J. Shavelson. "Reading Teachers' Judgments, Plans, and Decision Making." *Reading Teacher* Vol. 37, No. 3, (Dec 1983), pp. 280-286. ERIC # EJ289461

ABSTRACT: Summarizes research concerning how teachers' judgments, instructional planning, and interactive decision-making affect their classroom actions, particularly in reading instruction. Discusses implications for reading teachers.

Walker, Rena M. "Let's Stop the "Debate" and Consider the Theoretical Frameworks." (1984), 13 p. ERIC # ED253847

ABSTRACTS: A teacher's theoretical viewpoint is pervasive. It determines not only the materials chosen and the way the materials are used, but also the perception the teacher holds of the reading process. It is important, therefore, for teachers to understand the theory on which their views are based so that they can understand why they have chosen a particular book or basal. Basically, teachers use two different approaches to teach children to read: the synthetic/analytic approach and the holistic approach. Underlying each is a theoretical, psychological assumption of how children learn and how teachers relate to children during the learning process. Teachers using the synthetic/analytic approach present reading to children one piece of information at a time (letter, letter-sound relation, word) — from outside the children's realm of knowledge. The intent in this approach is to work on meaning after children have learned to read. In contrast, teachers using the holistic approach begin with what is meaningful for children and work from the inside out. Print is used in stories, directions, announcements, and other written forms that hold meaning for children. Teachers and prospective teachers need to understand the theoretical bases of both reading approaches and then identify with one or the other. This would stop the debate about which approach is better and allow teachers to consider what effects their choices have on students' conceptualizations of reading and reading performance.

Waugh, Ruth. "Selecting Elementary Reading Programs." *OSSC Bulletin* (Oregon School Study Council, Eugene), Vol. 23, No. 4, (Nov 1979), 49 p. ERIC # ED265629

ABSTRACT: Selecting elementary school reading program materials that will function as sharp and forceful teaching tools requires answer-

ing at least six basic questions: (1) What are the socioeconomic status, ages, and grade levels of the students concerned? (2) What do these students need to be taught? (3) Who are the resource people available and how will they be used? (4) Which books meet the school's general needs? (5) Do the component parts of the program assist with classroom organization? and (6) Which books should be adopted? This guide provides specific strategies to follow when answering these questions. The document suggests looking for programs with a common instructional core and an initial emphasis on phonics, and for program elements that expand the teacher's repertoire of skills, encourage flexible grouping of students, enable teachers to use both direct instruction and discovery learning, and help increase time on task. The selection committee is urged to submit its recommendations to the program's intended users for final review. Forms designed to aid decision-making at each stage of the selection process are included.

Wedman, Judy M. and Richard Robinson. "Effects of a Decision-Making Model on Preservice Teachers' Decision-Making Practices and Materials Use." *Reading Improvement* Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer 1988), pp. 110-116. ERIC # EJ376114

ABSTRACT: Discusses a study of changes in preservice teachers' ability to analyze reading instruction problems and prescribe instructional alternatives. Indicates reading methods courses may help participants' decision-making practices and materials use.

Weinshank, Annette B. et al. "Using Student Diagnostic Information to Establish an Empirical Data Base in Reading." Research Series No. 162. Michigan State University, East Lansing. Institute for Research on Teaching. (1985), 75 p. ERIC # ED262373

ABSTRACT: Enlarging upon the scope and agenda of earlier diagnostic research, a study was conducted to examine (1) teacher responses to receiving diagnostic information about some of their students, (2) effects on student achievement of teachers receiving both diagnostic information and diagnostic training, (3) diagnostic classifications that emerged from student performance, and (4) differential teacher effectiveness and instructional practices. Subjects included 10 experienced

fifth-grade classroom teachers. A reading diagnostic battery, developed for the previous studies, was individually administered as a pretest to 186 of the 192 students in the teachers' classrooms. An experimental group of five teachers, randomly assigned, received four hours of training in diagnostic reliability. Before and after the training, all 10 teachers diagnosed one of four randomly assigned simulated cases of reading difficulty at two different times. Teachers were also interviewed three times. Results showed that teachers responded positively to the receipt of specific diagnostic information about their students, seeing it as useful for thinking about and making changes in their instructional practices. Students for whom teachers received diagnostic information did not show significantly improved achievement over students for whom no information was provided. (Appendixes include the reading diagnostic battery and the interview questions.)

Wesson, Caren, et al. "The Impact of the Structure of Instruction and the Use of Technically Adequate Instructional Data on Reading Improvement." Minnesota University, Minneapolis, Institute for Research on Learning Disabilities. (1983), 46 p.
ERIC # ED236193

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to ascertain the effects of two factors, the database used for instructional decision-making and the structure of instruction, on student achievement. The dependent data were the number of words read correctly by 117 elementary school students on three basal reading passages. Students were rank ordered in two ways: first by the degree of implementation of a technically adequate curriculum-based measurement and evaluation system, and second by the degree of structure in their instructional programs. The top 27 percent were compared to the bottom 27 percent for both variables. The t tests on the mean z scores indicated no difference in achievement due to the structure of instruction. A significant difference was found between high and low implementation groups on one reading passage; differences between scores on two other passages were not significant but were in the same direction, supporting the hypothesis that a high degree of implementation of a technically adequate data system does lead to greater achievement. The discussion addresses implications for teaching practices.

Williamson, Peter A. and Steven B. Silvern. "Eliciting Creative Dramatic Play: Classroom Procedures." *Childhood Education* Vol. 63, No. 1 (Oct 1986), pp. 2-5. ERIC # EJ342921

ABSTRACT: Describes procedures found to be effective for eliciting children's creative dramatic play in the classroom. A second-grade classroom scenario provides an example of the way key components of play training techniques can be implemented by the teacher and indicates the decision-making processes to be addressed.

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